

Healing Your Body After Baby

What to do in the first few weeks after childbirth:

1. Respect the healing process: Whether you delivered vaginally or by cesarean, your body just went through significant changes. Be sure to give yourself time to rest and heal. Do not lift anything heavier than your baby and allow others to help you around your home.
2. Breathe: Your rib cage lifted and expanded to accommodate your growing uterus. Take deep breaths in through your nose, and feel your ribs draw down toward your pelvic area as you exhale. This will help ensure you are breathing deeply and bring your rib cage back to its pre-baby position.
3. Strengthen your pelvic floor muscles: You can begin Kegel exercises immediately postpartum, even after cesarean delivery, if cleared by your provider. Gently lift and squeeze your pelvic floor muscles and hold 5-10 seconds. Discontinue and talk with your provider if you feel any pain or discomfort. Vigorous abdominal exercises should wait until after the 6 week postpartum visit with your obstetric practitioner.
4. Use proper body mechanics:
 - Carry your baby in front of you and close to your body
 - Lift the car seat/infant carrier with two hands and hold it in front at the center of your body
 - Place the car seat on a surface at waist height to take your baby out to avoid bending and straining your low back.
 - Perform diaper changes on a raised changing table
 - Sit in a supportive chair and use a nursing pillow for feedings

Talk your obstetric practitioner about a referral to physical therapy if you experience any of the following common body changes after pregnancy:

- Weakness in your abdominal and pelvic floor muscles
- Low back or pelvic girdle pain
- Stress urinary incontinence (loss of urine with cough, laugh or sneeze)
- Diastasis recti (separation of the abdominal muscles)

Questions to Ask Your Health Care Professional

1. When can I safely return to exercise?

*Call the Upstate Women's
Health nurse line at
315-464-2756
for more information or
to make an appointment*

